EXCISE

414

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY John Simms DATE 2-26-81
PORTIONS DENIED AS CLASSIFICATION

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
TRANSMITTAL SLIP

CONFIDENTIAL

DATE 12/8/77

TO INR/DDR Attn: H. Lampert
For the Attention of

FROM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

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ITEMS/REMARKS

Enclosed is a report prepared by FSO Richard McCoy based on his observations of Guyana's northwest district during a consulate-field trip to that area.

IN REPLY REFER TO FILE NUMBER AND DRAFTING OFFICE

FILE NO.	SIGNATURE RCM
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FORM DS-4
12-64

1977

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MEMORANDUM

GUYANA - NORTHWEST DISTRICT.

PREFACE: This memorandum reports my observations during a trip to Matthews Ridge and Port Kaituma on August 29-30 and 31. It is designed to describe the infrastructure of the Government of Guyana (GOG) in the area including the Internal Security and Defense Forces in the district and mention briefly the productive sector of the region.

I. Infrastructure

A. Transportation - (1) Air: The area is serviced by scheduled thrice weekly air service between Georgetown and Matthews Ridge and twice weekly flights between Georgetown and Mabaruma. There is a weekly flight between Mabaruma, Matthews Ridge and Georgetown. Service is provided by Guyana Airways Corporation Siddely Hawkes twin-engine turbo-prop transport between Georgetown and Matthews Ridge and the smaller twin engined Islander between Mabaruma and Georgetown.

(2) Sea: The Northwest District is serviced by weekly steamer service that takes 22 hours between Georgetown and Mabaruma. Launches must then be hired to tak individuals to selected points up the Barima, Kaituma and other major

rivers. A canal was cut into the Kaituma River to permit oceangoing traffic (5,000 tons or smaller) to proceed to Port Kaituma.

(3) Land: At the present time it is not possible to travel overland from Georgetown to any points in the Northwest District. The terrain between the Coastal region and the District is rain forest and mountains that is continually cut by rivers and creeks.

(4) Rail: Within the Northwest District a narrow gauge rail line still operates daily between Matthews Ridge and Port Kaituma. This rail line carries passengers and freight and was originally constructed to haul manganese ore by an American mining company that closed down its operations about 5 years ago.

(5) Other: Apart from the railroad, all other transportation is either by truck or land rover over dirt roads hacked out of the wilderness. These roads presently are reportedly passable the year round although during the rainy season they can only be transited by four wheel drive vehicles. The main roads radiate from Matthews Ridge West to the Guyana National Service (GNS) camp at Papaya and North to Port Kaituma. There are trails leading West and South to the Venezuelan border but they are ill defined and presumably used only by the GNS or the Guyana Defense Force (GDF). The roads between Matthews Ridge and Port Kaituma (approximately 40 miles) follow the natural fold in the hilly rain forested area

that is broken every so often by meadows. This region is watered by the Barima River that is reputed to contain gold and diamonds...

B. Government - Matthews Ridge is the regional center of the Government in the District. The Regional Minister resides here as does the Regional District Officer. There is also a Regional Agriculture Officer and a Medical Dispenser. The clinic is temporarily without a medical doctor. The government took over intact the building infrastructure left by the American manganese company. They have direct telephone communication with Georgetown rather than radio-telephone that is normal for other parts of the interior. There are also District Offices located at Port Kaituma and Mabaruma. The Government has an experimental agricultural farm (the Burnham Agricultural Station) at Arikaka, ten miles north of Matthews Ridge on the road to Port Kaituma. Matthews Ridge has a satellite city, Barima, with the usual rum shops, a school, a private guest house, and the aforementioned dispensary or clinic. As yet, there are no facilities for tourists to take advantage of the beautiful vistas of rolling rain forest that can be admired from the Government's VIP Guest House located on Matthews Ridge. Commercial transportation consists of hitching rides on a land rover or riding on a truck or the train that travels

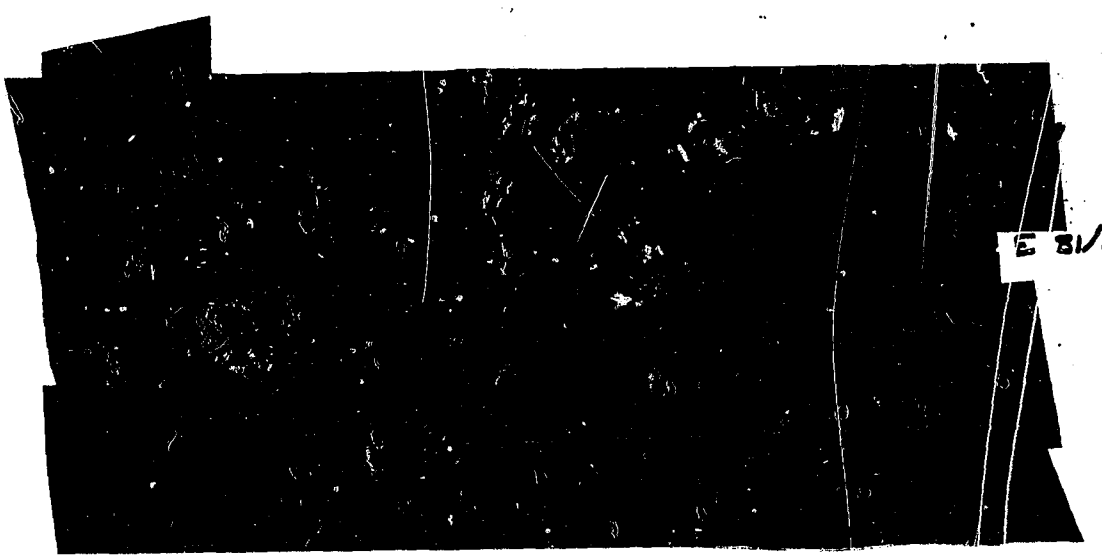
between Port Kaituma and Barima-Matthews Ridge.

II. Productive Sector

The Government's present thrust in the region is toward agriculture. They have been reasonably successful with cattle raising and ground provisions, including yams and cassava. There is also an American colony located about 5 miles southeast of Port Kaituma that is extensively engaged in agriculture and whose presence has provided momentum to the District's development plan. However, because of the region's remoteness, formidable problems must be surmounted. The GOG will have to develop further infrastructure in schools, housing, medical facilities and more reliable air and sea service if it is to properly exploit the area. The lack of decent schools, with the exception of Port Kaituma where a new multilateral school (high school) has just been completed, is the cause for many of the civil servants living in Matthews Ridge to leave their families in Georgetown. The GOG has only one Cuban contract doctor in the region and he is located at Mabaruma. Reportedly he has problems because his English is limited. There is an American doctor at the People's Temple Agricultural Mission who purportedly is ready to assist but in any genuine medical emergency the GDF must come in and fly out the injured or sick person. Mining is at a standstill in the area since the

American company mining for manganese ore departed. There are some fish ponds for "fish farming" outside Matthews Ridge that are utilized to provide another source of protein. Potato cultivation was tried but was curtailed because of its lack of success.

GOG officials emphasized that their plans are to develop the infrastructure of the region so that its agricultural potential can be exploited. They believe the area is particularly suited to cattle raising, ground provisions and citrus. They anticipate that once they can attract more settlers and provide additional community services, the area will sustain itself and begin to provide for ancillary food industries. However, these plans will require a large infusion of capital which is beyond the ability of the Government to furnish in the foreseeable future.



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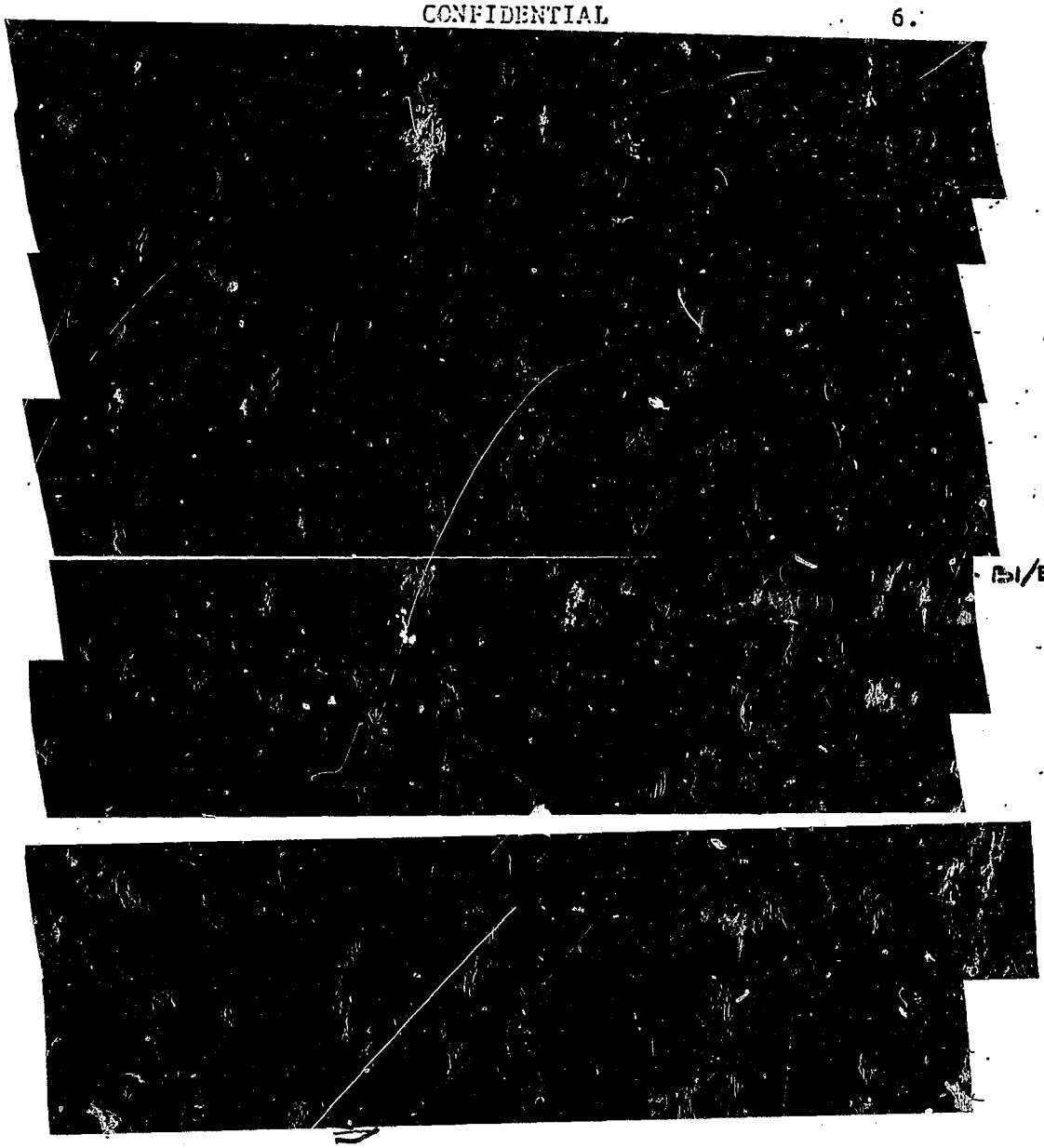

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